

DEVELOPMENT OF THE RICHARD J. BROWN LIBRARY
INFORMATIONAL KIOSK

By

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ABSTRACT

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This paper follows the development of the “Richard J. Brown Library Information Center”, a computer-based informational kiosk. The information center was developed in response to a perceived need by the college’s Audio Visual (A/V) department. It was placed in service for a trial period early in February of 1998, and remained operational until the end of the semester in May of 1998. The information center was to answer basic questions the library patrons had about the Richard J. Brown Library. The library staff saw it as a place where questions regarding locations, features, and policies could be readily answered. The center would augment services provided by the circulation desk staff and serve as a backup during times when the staff was busy with other patrons. After an initial rush by the curious, utilization of the center was minimal and the library staff began to wonder about its usefulness. The information center was taken off line for evaluation at the end of the semester. Evaluation of the project lead to the conclusion that it was not meeting the library’s needs and should be discontinued.

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DEVELOPMENT OF THE RICHARD J. BROWN LIBRARY INFORMATIONAL KIOSK

Introduction

The “Richard J. Brown Library Information Center,” a computer-based informational kiosk, was placed in service for a trial period early in February of 1998, near the start of the spring semester, and remained operational until the end of the semester in May of 1998. The information center’s intended purpose was to answer basic questions that patrons had about the library. The library staff saw it as a place where questions regarding locations, features, and policies could be readily answered. The center would augment services provided by the circulation desk staff and serve as a backup during times when the staff was busy with other patrons. After the initial rush, utilization of the center was minimal and the library staff began to wonder about its usefulness. The information center was taken off line for evaluation at the end of the semester.

Method

The Problem

The library information center project grew out of a library staff retreat held in March of 1995 at the U. W. Stevens Point Tree Haven Center. The need for an alternative place where patrons could get answers to their questions was discussed. Each semester, the circulation desk staff are inundated with questions about the basic library services. “How do I get a library card?” “Where can I get onto the Internet?” “How long can I check out a book?” “Where are the videos located?” “How can I get E-mail?” The library staff thought that an

informational kiosk could give the answers quickly and conveniently to patrons. This would free up the circulation staff, allowing them to meet new demands for their time. As the library has moved away from books and into online services for reference, the circulation desk staff has been called away more often from the desk to work with patrons at the terminals. The expansion of the library's computer lab has also added to this problem.

The library staff voiced various concerns during the discussion phase of the project. The discussions took place at both monthly library staff meetings and one-on-one conversations with the A/V department staff in April and May of 1995. The concerns were:

- could it be easily developed with off-the-shelf software?
- would it be user friendly?
- would library patrons want to use it?
- what is the best location?

These concerns would have to be answered as the project's development phase moved forward (A. Mussehl, S. Brant, B. Heiffner, M. McCloskey, personal communication, April, 1995). The library director and staff assigned the A/V Department the responsibility to move ahead with the development and implementation of the information center.

Background

Located in northern Wisconsin, the Richard J. Brown Library serves the students and staff of Nicolet Area Technical College, a small community college that is part of the Wisconsin Technical College System. The library considers

itself a district resource and encourages all students, staff, and district residents in the area to use its resources. The library contains about 45,000 books, over 1500 paper and on-line periodicals, and approximately 7000 videotapes and audiotapes. Each year the number of computers that access online services has grown. The library currently has one station dedicated to the online catalog, four stations for e-mail, two stations for online database research, and a twenty-station computer lab where patrons can access various online databases, instructional software, and the Internet.

The A/V department discussed with the library staff how they were dealing with the basic library service questions. The method used was a library handbook that was first developed in the mid 1980's. The handbook is given out during tours and to new patrons when issued a library card, passed out to new students in the orientation package, and left on display in the library. The handbook is updated as needed with 1000 copies printed. This method has proved somewhat successful but the staff was not sure how often it was used by patrons. Other than those handbooks given out during tours, not many were taken. With the constant changes in the library's capabilities, it was often out of date within a year. This meant frequent updating and sending it to a printer, which made it a costly proposition. The computer based information kiosk was seen as a way to minimize these costs. A software solution could be easily updated anytime a need arose. Admittedly, the software solution was also viewed as something that would give the library a high tech look. It was seen as something "cool" to show off to visitors from other libraries (A. Mussehl, personal communication, April, 1995).

The library staff also discussed how the information center's success or failure could or would be judged. A brief feed back form (see appendix A) was developed and the staff planned on gathering information from it. The other form of judging success or failure would be casual observation by the circulation desk and other library staff. The staff would have to judge if the information center was serving its intended purpose. Were many patrons using it and were the patrons finding it useful? No set or fixed usage guidelines were ever developed. The final determination for continuation of the project would be by the library staff. This would be based upon the staff's feeling if the time spent in keeping the center up to date equaled, was less than, or was more than the time spent by the patrons using the center. The trial period was initially set for one semester.

A stand-alone computer at a single location was chosen as the best alternative. The circulation desk would be the location. This is the point of entry to the library and the place where most questions were asked. Locating the information center on the college's network server was discussed. This would allow many sites in the library and across campus to access the information center each computer could not be given a specific reference as to its current location. A single location would allow for a "You Are Here" arrow to be placed on the floor plan. (see Appendix C)

Procedure

Five software programs - Astound 2.0, Freelance Graphics, Visual Basic, Power Point, and HSC Interactive were selected for testing based upon reviews in various computer magazines (Gold Disk Astound, 1995; Haskin, 1995; HSC

Interactive, 1995; Joss, 1996; Lindstrom, 1995; Simone, 1994). The Audio Visual staff judged each for ease of programming and the software's ability to perform the required task.

Astound 3.0 for Windows 3.1 (an upgrade from 2.0 was made available during the late stages of the test period) was chosen after investigation and proved to be an easy-to-use tool for developing the library information center. The supplied reference manual (Searl & Pollak, 1996) was studied and we set to work. After the design for 12 template pages was completed, individual pages were easily constructed. Linking between pages within the information center was easy to program. Just a few clicks in the drop-down menu and the buttons on the pages were linked to anywhere you wanted to go. Animation features were available and easy to use. The program proved to be a very flexible tool for development and met most of the staff's expectations. The software ran well on an old 486 computer with Windows 3.1 operating system. This allowed the library to utilize old computer resources for new needs.

Problems, however, did arise and had to be dealt with. Most of the problems could be overcome. A problem occurred when trying to return using a button from pages within a defined range in the program to a specific starting point. This problem was overcome by duplicating the starting page and having it return to a specific one. The "play next" feature allows the program to return to the starting page after a designated period of time and was one of the features of this software that was highly praised during the evaluation phase. This would be very advantageous when patrons left the center without returning to the beginning page

because the program would automatically return to the starting page after 60 seconds of idle time. It would then be ready for the next user.

Experiments with this software package before it was chosen failed to discover that the “play next” feature would not work when you are within a defined range. It would have to advance through the entire range before returning to the start. Most of the ranges used were just two to three pages (see Appendix B, C, &E) so it was not a problem. However the “LC Classification” (see Appendix D) section was another matter because it was very long. Here the “play next” would cycle to the next page and all following pages in the range until it reached that last page. Then it would return to the start. I have been in contact with technical support at Astound and they tell me this may be rectified in a future version.

Evaluation

The initial users observed at the information center during the first days of operation and the ones who filled out the feedback forms were library staff and college faculty. These users had a strong base of knowledge about the library and were not the intended audience. They looked at it in terms of what it looked like and how it operated. For them it was like playing with a new toy. The suggestions and comments they gave were on how they thought the center could be improved. The information center did not show them anything they did not already know. Their interest was short lived.

I discussed the usage of the center with the Circulation Desk Manager in mid-semester. Her observation was that after the first week very few patrons were using it (M. McCloskey, personal communication, March, 1998). We added new signage around the library to inform patrons of its existence. I worked at a table

in the library for two days in a row to observe usage of the information center. This very unscientific method allowed me to observe some limited usage. The few patrons who used it did so when the circulation desk staff was busy. Some found answers and moved on while others went to the circulation desk and asked questions. A few were just curious and played with it. They did not seem to be seeking specific information.

The low usage and the observed pattern of patrons stopping at the desk to ask questions and not using the information center lead the staff to believe that the center's location was wrong. It was located at the circulation desk where staff are always available for questioning. The Circulation Desk Manager concurs with this assessment (M. McCloskey, personal communication, April, 1998). The staff is thinking about other possible locations and will make this a part of the reevaluation. A more centralized location within the library may prove to be a better location. This would move it away from the circulation desk area. Another possibility would be to locate it on the library server which would make the information center available at all library computer terminals, although this would make the "You are here" feature difficult to incorporate (see Appendix C). The college is planning on developing informational kiosk for students and locating them in all campus buildings. Another possibility would be to incorporate the information center on the library's web page.

After spending time during the summer of 1998 reviewing the project, the library staff decided not to bring the center back into operation for the 1998 fall semester. The staff could not justify the time it would take to rework it in order to relocate the center to a new location. The staff decided to wait until the school

determines when or if to implement a campus-wide informational kiosk system and move with them. Placement on our web page is what many are starting to see as the right location.

Conclusion

Overall this project proved to be an educational one for me. My interest was mainly in the development stage. Finding and working with the software proved to be the most interesting. Initially I was disappointed with the usage. I expected more people to use the system and generate more feedback that I could use to improve it. It turned out that was not the case and it was best to let the project end for the time being.

The primary reason for the information center's removal was low usage. Needed space on the circulation desk was also a factor. Additionally, the information center's location on the circulation desk may have interfered with the library's theft detection system. A service representative for the theft detector's manufacturer blamed the occasional false reading on emissions from the computer monitor. The decreased number of false alarms after its removal seems to confirm this analysis.

References

- Gold disk Astound 2.0. PC World. (1995, August). pp. 145-146
- Haskin, D. (1995, June 13). Astound adds multimedia pizzazz. PC Magazine, p. 48
- Joss, M. (1996, January). Multimedia presents! CD-ROM Professional, p. 62
- Lindstrom, R., (1995, August). Multimedia is the message. PC World, pp. 143-157
- HSC InterActive lowers cost of desktop presentations. PC Magazine (1995, October 27), p60
- Searl, H., & Pollak, A, (1996). Astound 3.0 for Windows 3.1. Mississauga, Ontario: Astound Inc.
- Simone, L. (1994, February 22). Two roads to kiosk creations. PC Magazine, pp. 250-251

Appendix A: Evaluation Form

Richard J. Brown Library Information Center
FEED BACK FORM

The library is attempting to develop a self-help Information Center which can answer your basic questions about the library's services and policies. Please take time to try out the Center and give us your feedback on what we can do to improve it.

Did you find the Information Center useful? Yes - No (circle one)

What additional topics would you add?

How could it be improved?

Comments

Appendix B: Introduction & Index Kiosk Pages

You navigate through the Library Information Center by clicking on command buttons and BLUE text

Command Buttons



= Exit the program



= Topic list



= Next page (if available)



= Previous page (if available)

BLUE text = more information on that topic.



Remember to click on the right arrow to get to next page

Welcome to the Richard J. Brown Library Information Center

click mouse anywhere on screen for instructions



AV Department

Audio Tapes

Best Sellers

Books

Campus Map

Card Catalog

CD-Rom Databases

Children's Books

Children's Videos

Computer Lab

Elevator

Fines

Floorplan

Gift Policy

Hours

ILC/BE

Internet access



Remember - Click on the TOPIC of interest



ITV Classroom

LC Classifications

Library Card

Loan Period

Loan Restrictions

Mission Statement

Music CD's

Newspapers



Remember - Click on the TOPIC of interest

On-Line Catalog

Pamphlet File

Pathfinders

Periodicals

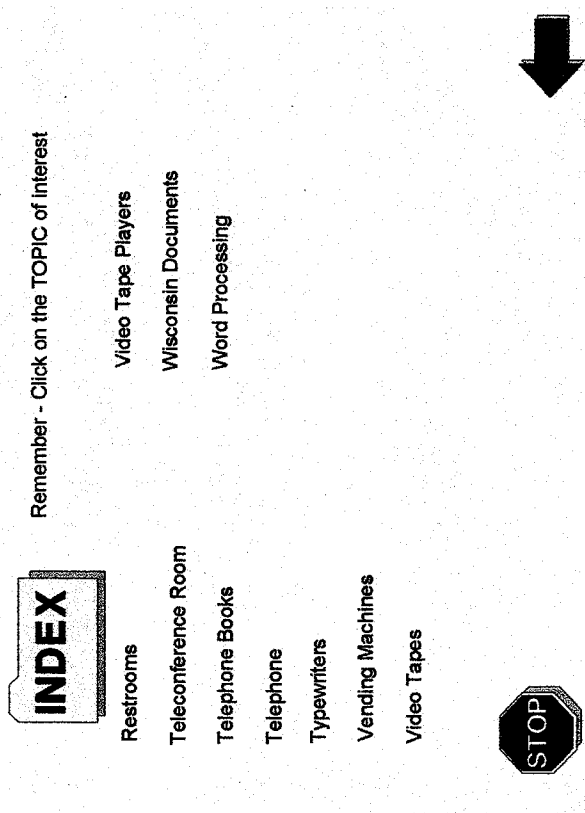
Photocopier

Quiet Study

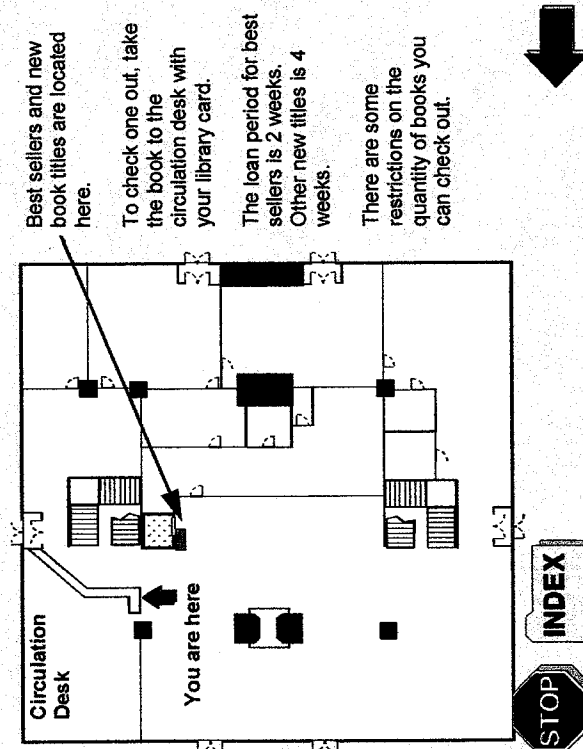
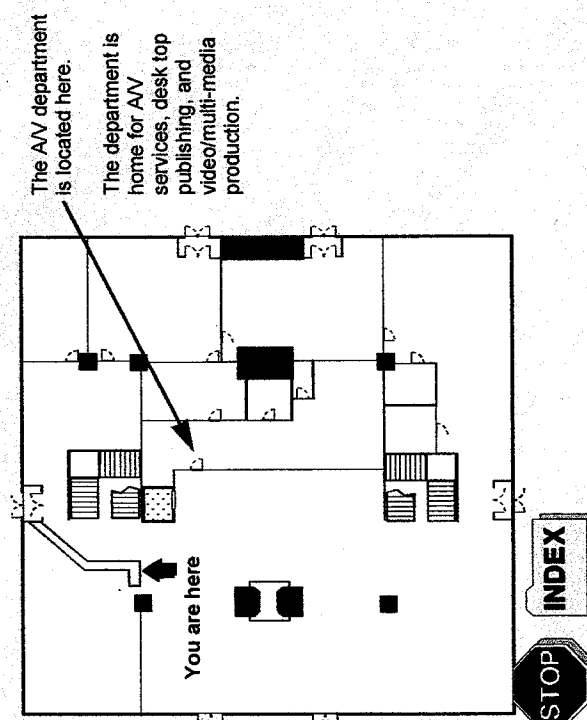
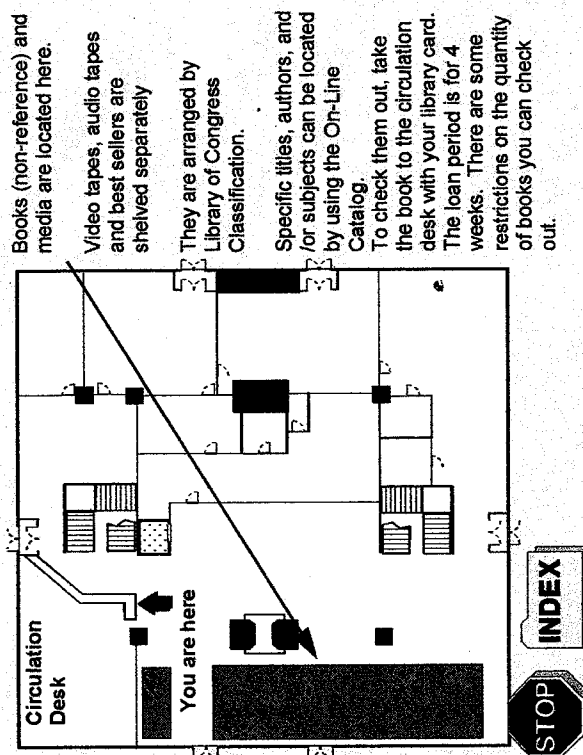
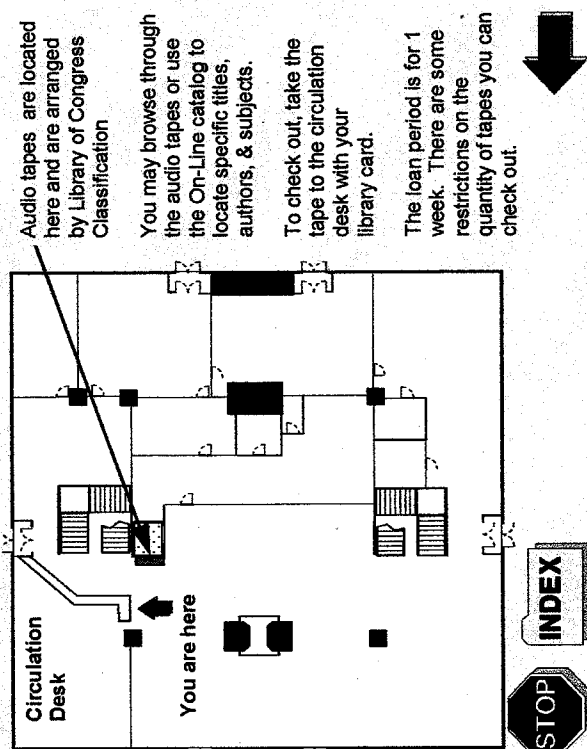
Reference

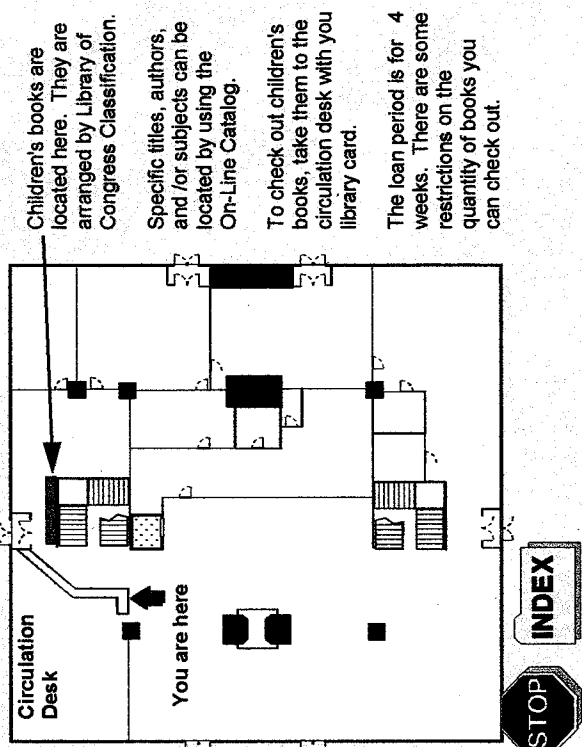
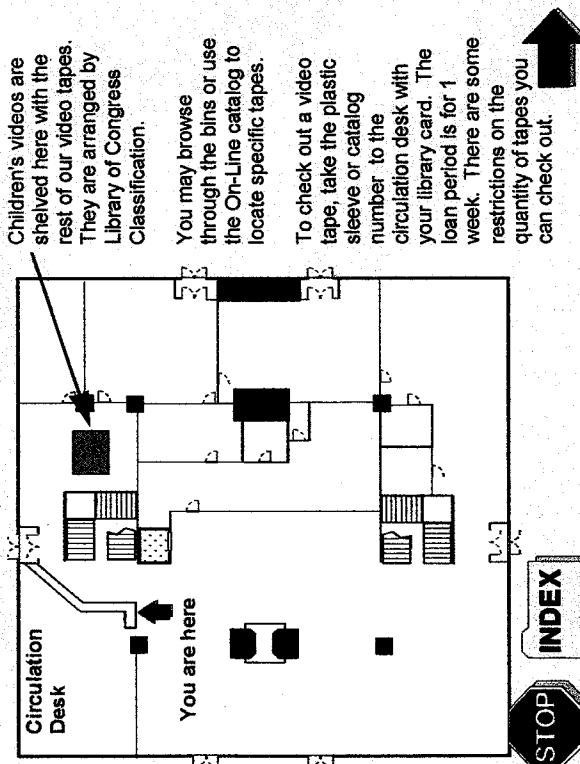
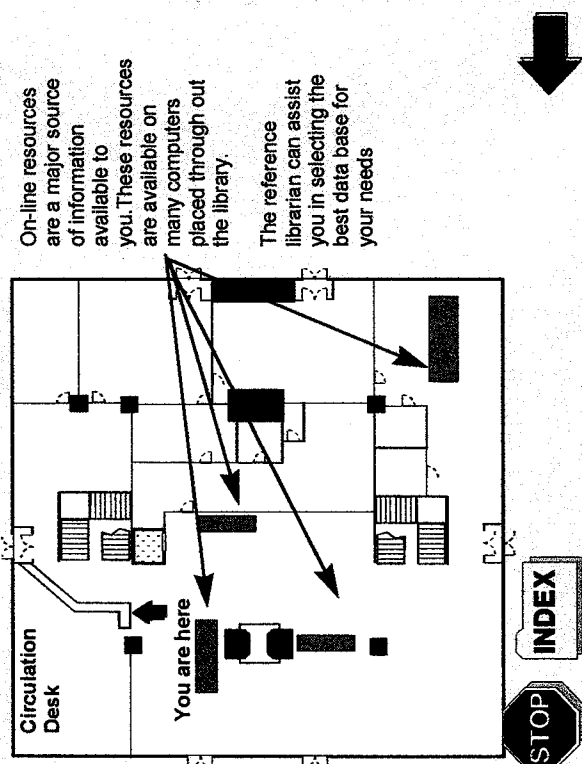
Referege Librarian





Appendix C: Location Map Kiosk Pages





The library staff recommends you look in the following LC Classifications for children's videos

PN1994.5 - Juvenile Literature
 PN 1997.5 - Cartoon Play, Scenarios
 PZ -7 - Juvenile Belles Lettres

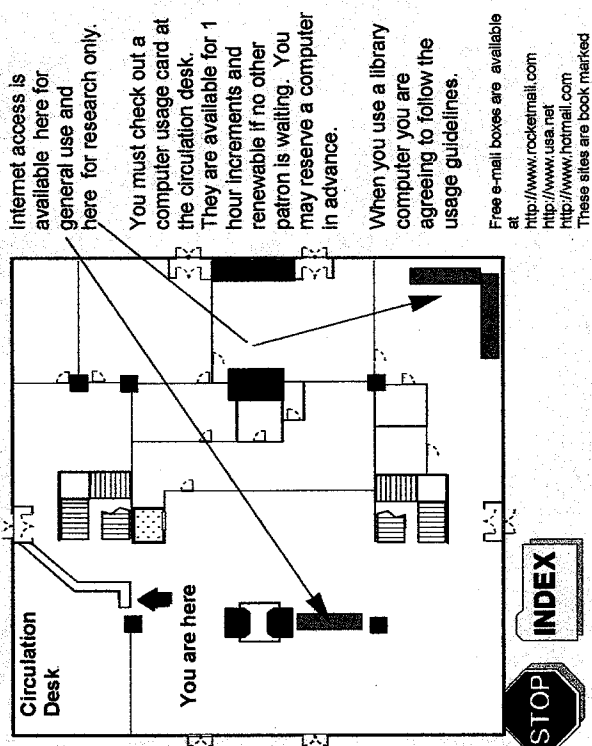
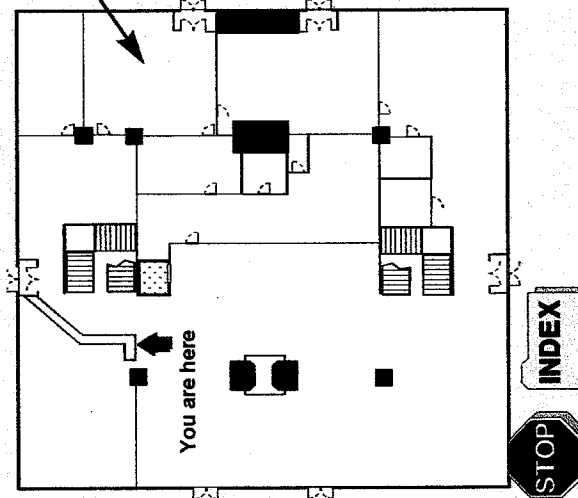


BE developmental courses (preparation for post-secondary education) are available in the classroom at the Rhineland and Lakeland campuses. Students taking developmental courses should register through the office of Academic Advising before classes begin or through the first week of classes.

The BE program offers free basic skills refresher sessions and GED/HSED preparation in an open lab setting at the Rhineland and Lakeland campuses and at Adult Basic Education Centers throughout the district. Students may enroll in these labs at any time during the semester, provided space is available.

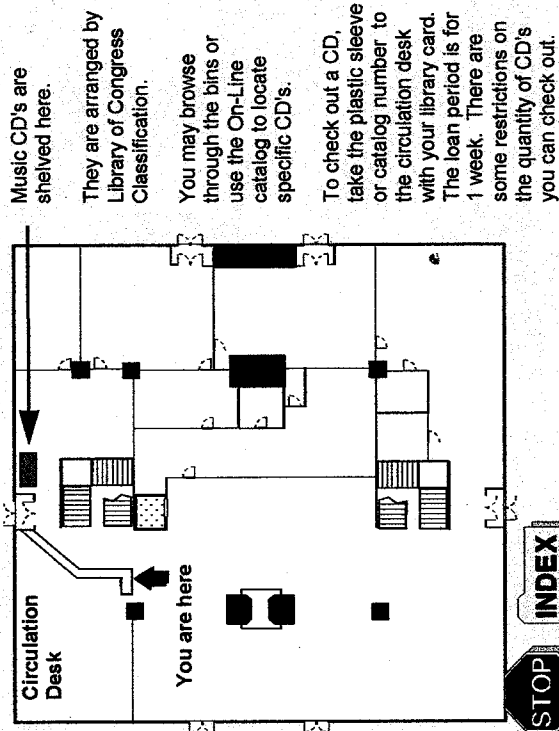


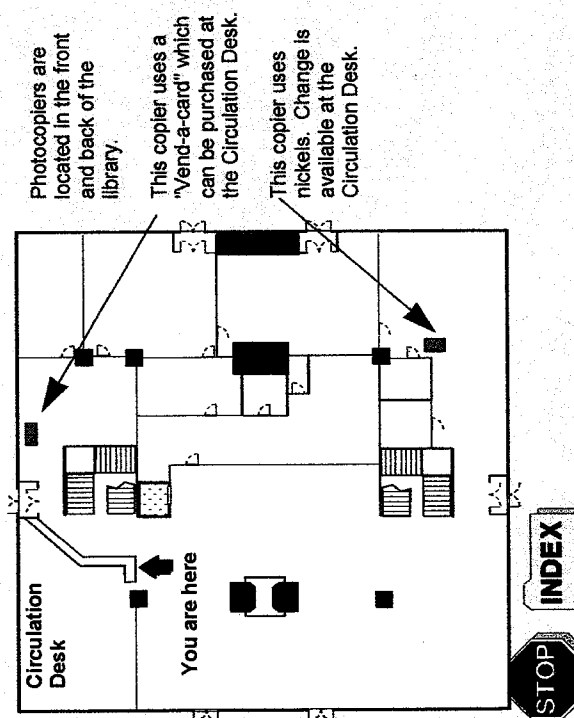
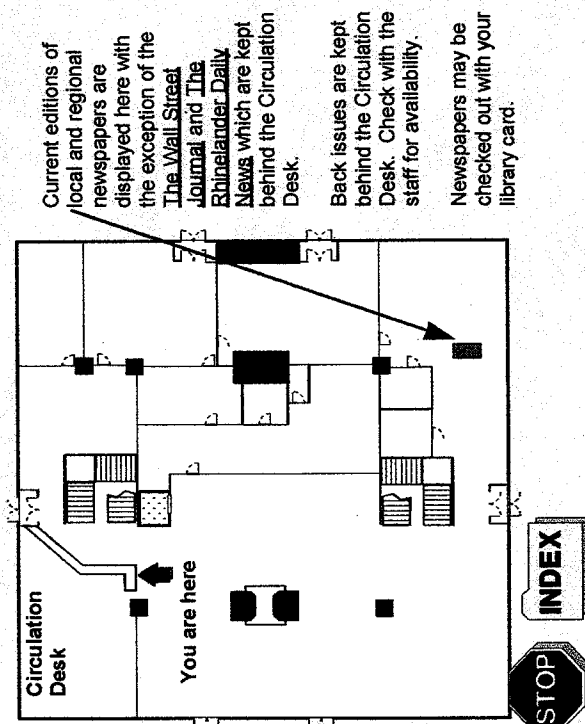
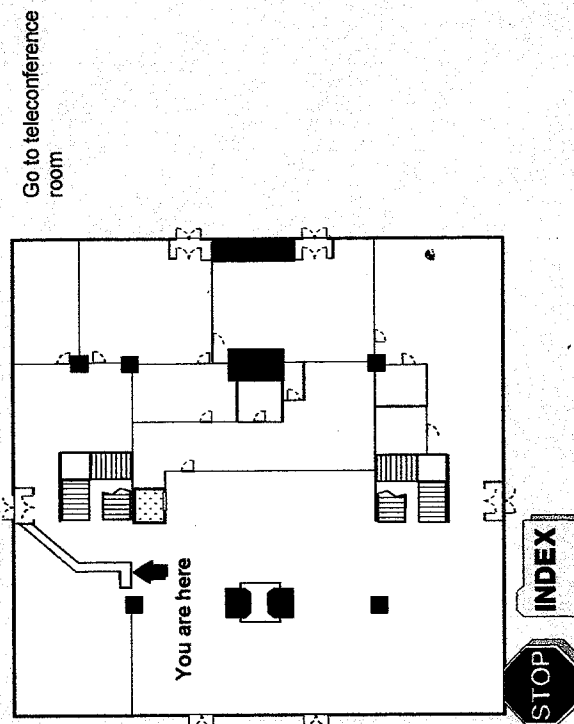
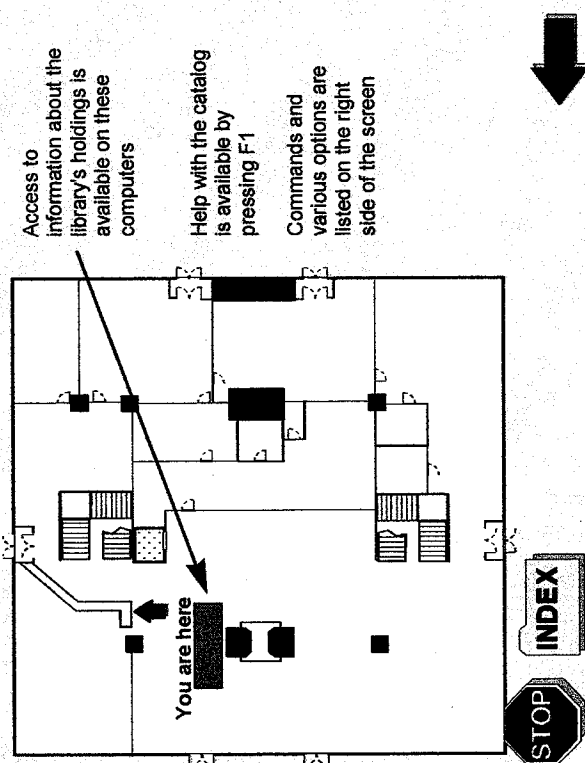
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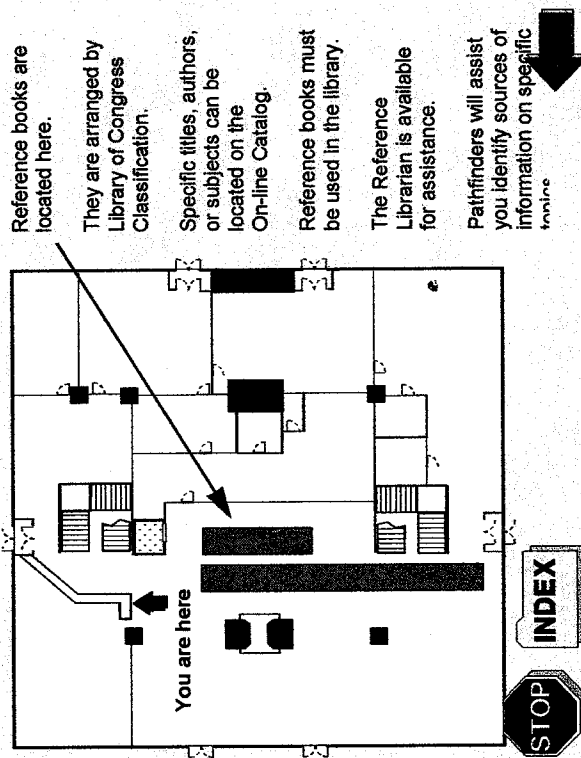
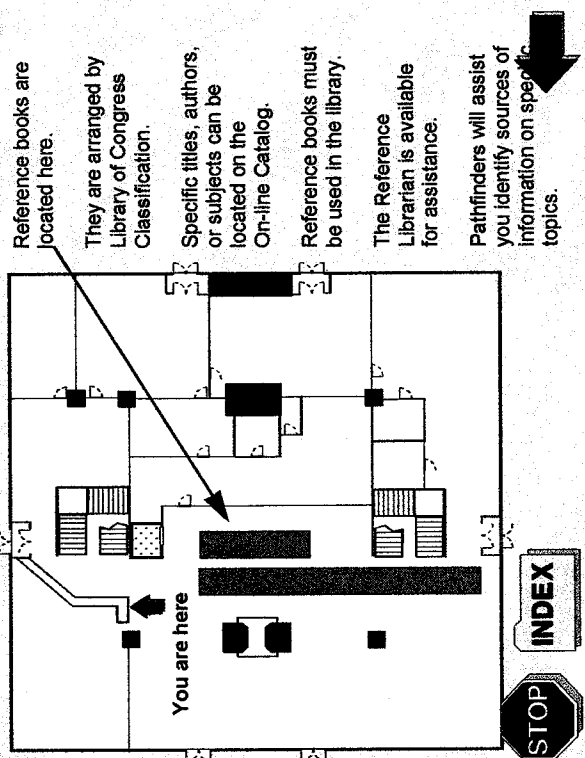
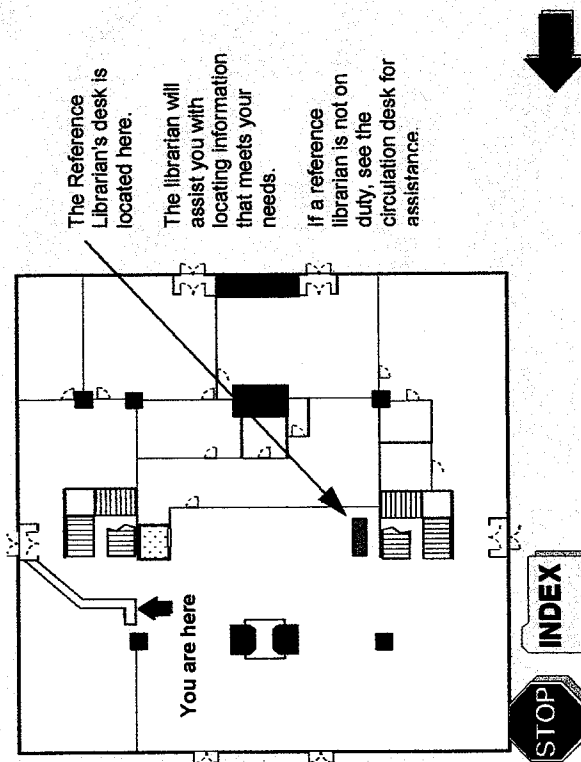
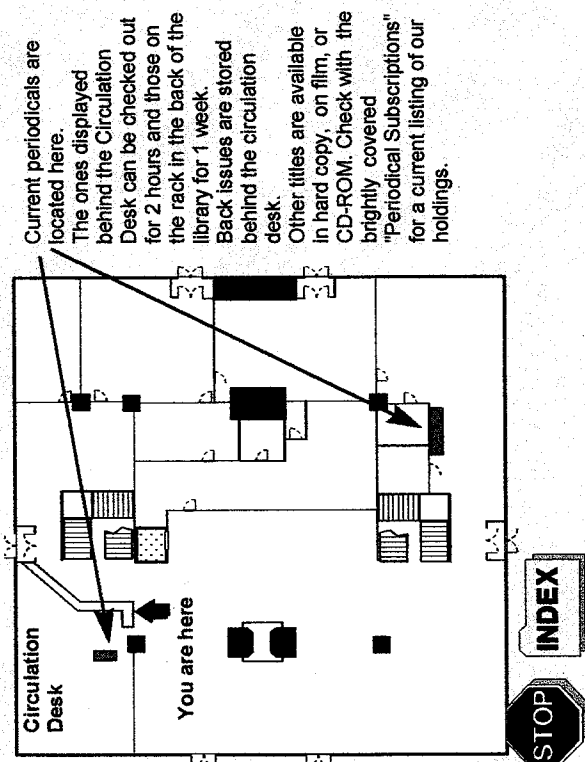


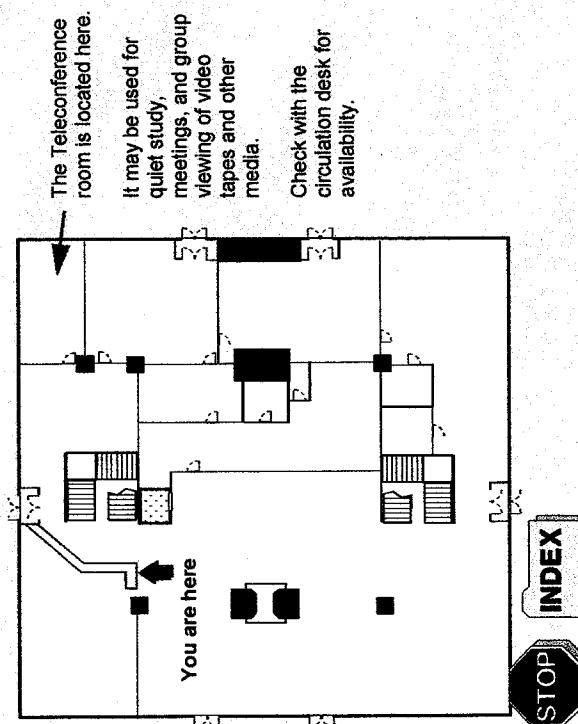
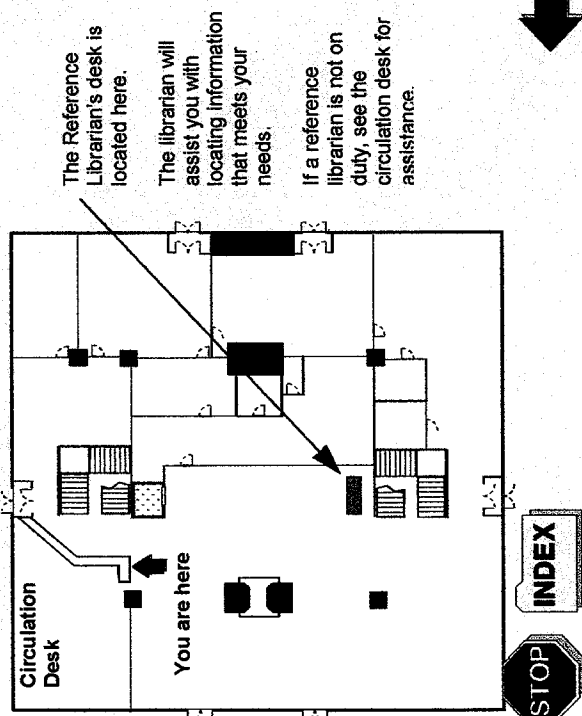
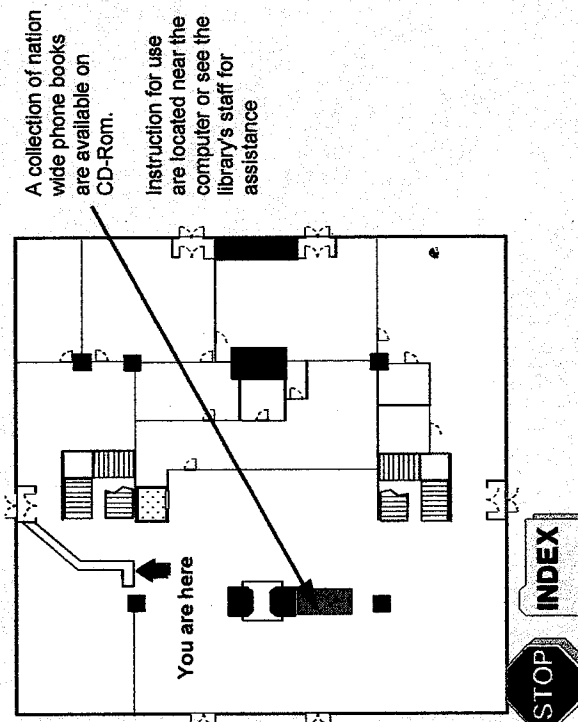
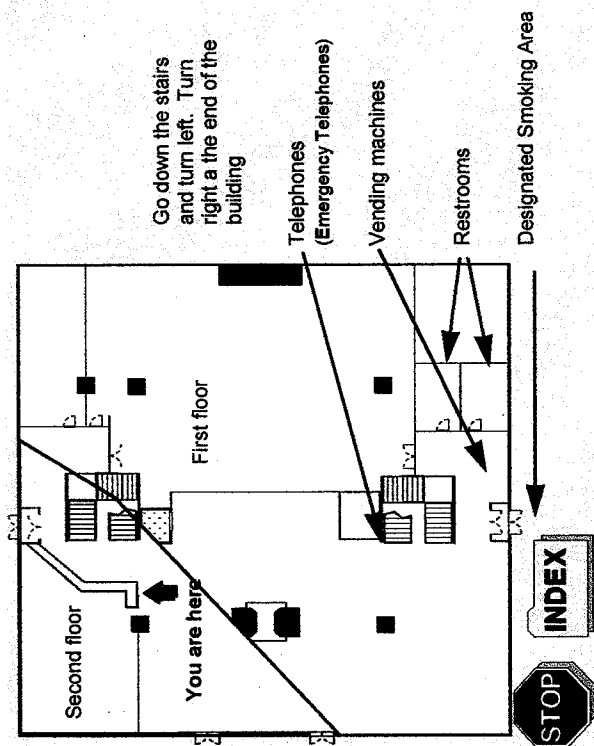
When you use a library computer you are agreeing to follow the usage guidelines.

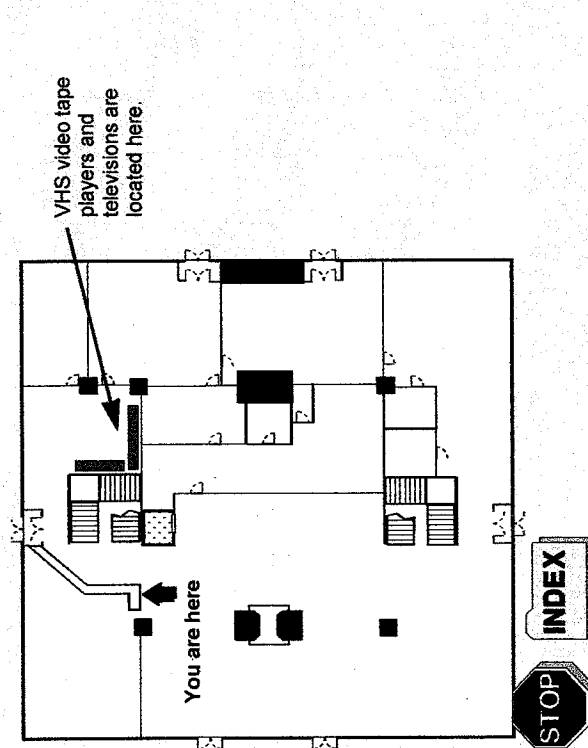
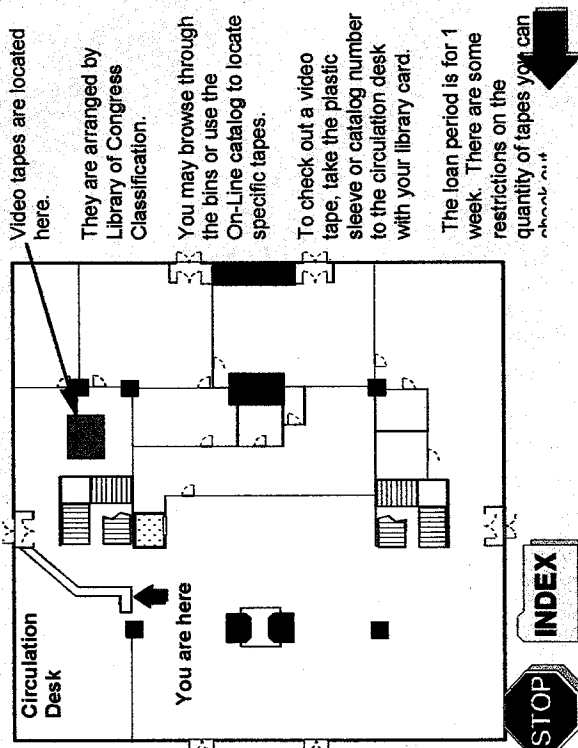
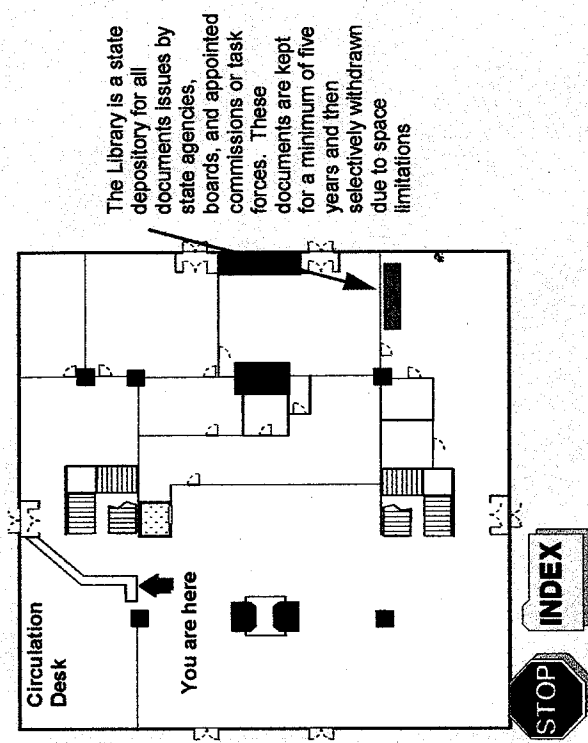
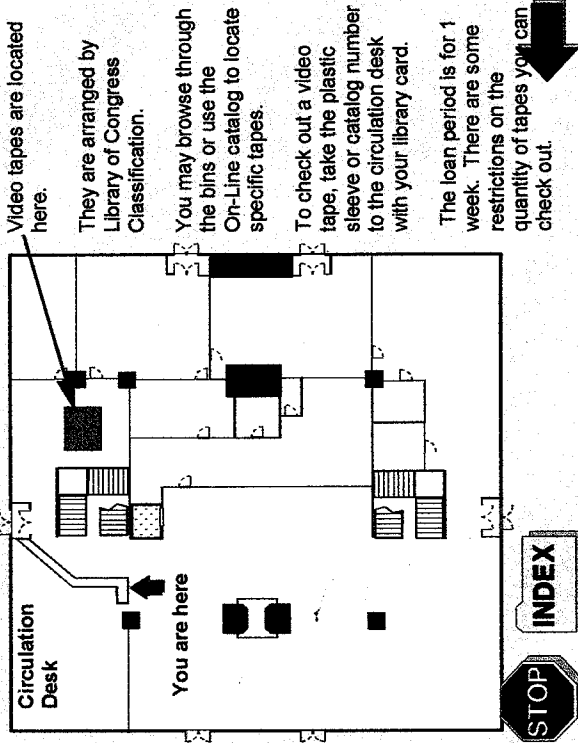
Free e-mail boxes are available at
<http://www.rockemail.com>
<http://www.usa.net>
<http://www.hotmail.com>
 These sites are book marked

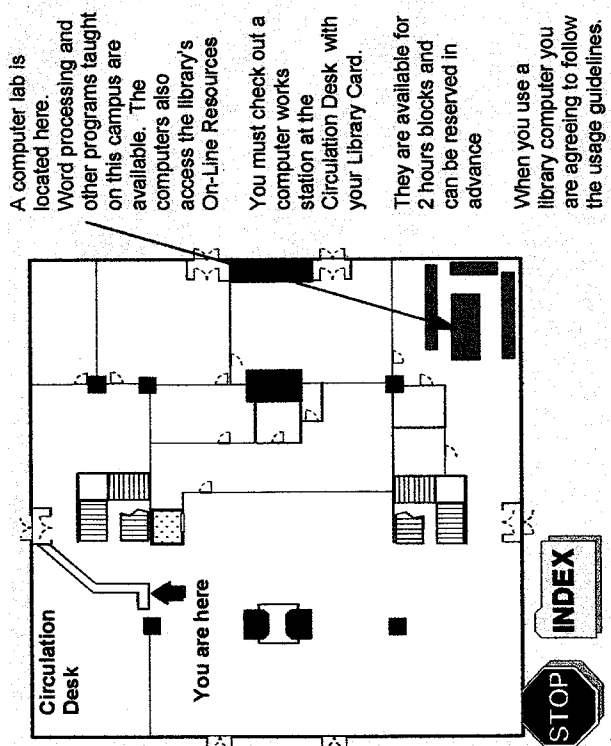












The Library of Congress (LC) classifications separate knowledge into 21 classes using all the letters of the alphabet except I, O, W, X, & Y. Each class is designated by a capital letter of the alphabet. Division and subdivisions within each subclass are identified by integral numbers in ordinary sequence.

A = General Works
 B = Philosophy
 C = History - Auxiliary Science of
 D = History - General & Old World
 E = History - America - US
 F = History - Local US & Americas - Non US
 G = Geography, Anthropology, Recreation
 H = Social Sciences
 J = Political Science
 K = Law
 L = Education
 M = Music
 N = Fine Art
 P = Language & Literature
 Q = Science
 R = Medicine
 S = Agriculture
 T = Technology
 U = Military Science
 V = Naval Science
 Z = Bibliography & Library Science



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A - GENERAL WORKS

Here are classed works too general or comprehensive to be classed with any particular subject, however broad

AC 1-199
 1-195
 Collections. Series. Collected works
 Collections of monographs, essays, etc.
 For collections published under the auspices of learned bodies (institutions or societies), see AS
 Inaugural and program dissertations
 Pamphlet collections
 Scrapbooks
 AE 1-90
 Encyclopedias (General)
 AG 1-600
 1-90
 Dictionaries and other general reference books
 Dictionaries. Minor encyclopedias
 Including popular and juvenile encyclopedias
 General works, pocketbooks, receipts, etc.
 Questions and answers
 Wonders. Curiosities
 Pictorial works
 Notes and queries
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 Museology. Museum methods, technique, etc.
 Collectors and collecting. Private collections
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 For history and description of individual newspapers, see PN4891+

AP 1-271
 101-115
 200-203
 Periodicals (General)
 Humorous periodicals
 Juvenile periodicals

AS 1-911
 2.5-4
 Academies and learned societies (General)
 International associations, congresses, conferences, etc.

AY 10-2001
 30-1730
 2001
 Yearbooks. Almanacs. Directories
 Here are classed general works only
 Almanacs
 Directories
 Here are classed general works on theory, methods of compilations, etc.



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LC INDEX



AZ 20-999
 999
 History of scholarship and learning. The humanities
 Popular errors, delusions and superstitions



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LC INDEX



A - GENERAL WORKS

Here are classed works too general or comprehensive to be classed with any particular subject, however broad

- AC 1-199 Collections. Series. Collected works
1-195 Collections of monographs, essays, etc.
For collections published under the auspices of learned bodies (institutions or societies), see AS
801-895 Inaugural and program dissertations
901-995 Pamphlet collections
999 Scrapbooks
- AE 1-90 Encyclopedias (General)
- AG 1-600 Dictionaries and other general reference books
1-90 Dictionaries. Minor encyclopedias
Including popular and juvenile encyclopedias
General works, pocketbooks, receipts, etc.
103-190 Questions and answers
195-196 Wonders. Curiosities
240-243 Pictorial works
250 Notes and queries
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1-21 Indexes to individual newspapers
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111-160 Museology. Museum methods, technique, etc.
200-501 Collectors and collecting. Private collections
- AN Newspapers
For history and description of individual newspapers, see PN4891+
- AP 1-271 Periodicals (General)
101-115 Humorous periodicals
200-203 Juvenile periodicals
- AS 1-911 Academies and learned societies (General)
2.5-4 International associations, congresses, conferences, etc.
- AY 10-2001 Yearbooks. Almanacs. Directories
Here are classed general works only
30-1730 Almanacs
2001 Directories
Here are classed general works on theory, methods of compilations, etc.



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- AZ 20-999 History of scholarship and learning. The humanities
999 Popular errors, delusions and superstitions



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Including individual philosophers and schools
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By period
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Medieval 720-765
Renaissance 770-785
Modern 790-5739
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300-450 Ontology
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493-701
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For general philosophical treatises, see *BD10 +*
History and systems
Including individual philosophers and schools
of philosophy
By period
Ancient
Medieval
Renaissance
Modern
By region or country
Logic
Speculative philosophy
General philosophical works
Metaphysics
Epistemology. Theory of knowledge
Methodology
Ontology
Including the soul, immortality
Cosmology
Including teleology, space and time, structure of
matter, plurality of worlds



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699-711
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For social psychology, see *HM*
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Experimental psychology
Sensation. Aesthesiology
Cognition. Perception. Intuition
Motivation
Emotion
Will. Choice
Applied psychology
Comparative psychology
Personality
Genetic psychology
Including psychology of mental development or
evolution in the individual or in the race
Developmental psychology
Child psychology
Temperament. Character
Physiognomy
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1700-3505 Interior decoration. House decoration
3600-9955 Other arts and art industries
3700-4995 Ceramics. Pottery. Porcelain
4700-4890 Costume and its accessories
4997-6060 Enamel. Glass. Glyptic arts
Including gems, jade, ivory, bone
6400-8459 Metalwork
Including armor, jewelry, plate, brasses, pewter
8800-9505.5 Textile arts and art needlework
9600-9955 Woodwork
Including carvings, fretwork, inlaying

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- 1-820 Arts in general
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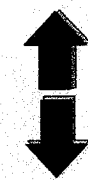
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4. To not seek unauthorized access to any computer system or damage or alter software components of any network or database
5. To not make any changes to setup or configuration of the software or hardware
6. To use e-mail, participate in chat groups, or use the net for "recreational purposes" only on those internet computers reserved for those activities.



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Books	\$.25/day	Miscellaneous Media	\$.25/day
Videotapes	\$.25/day		

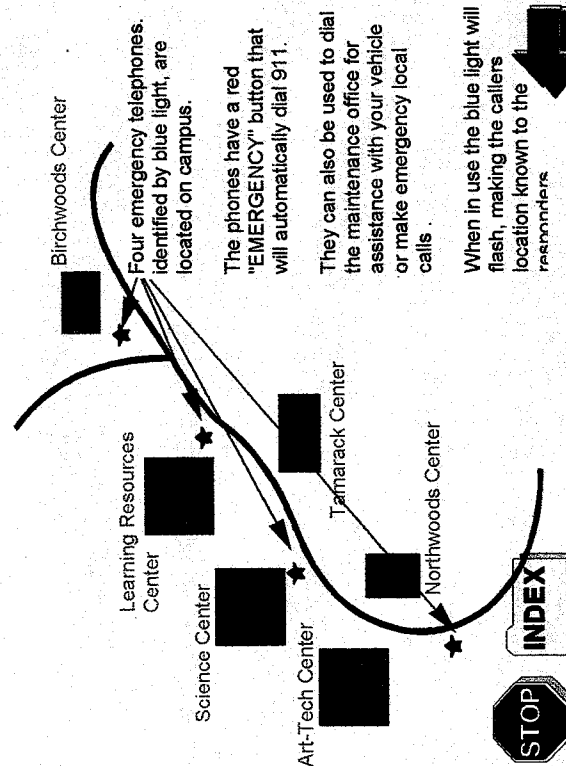
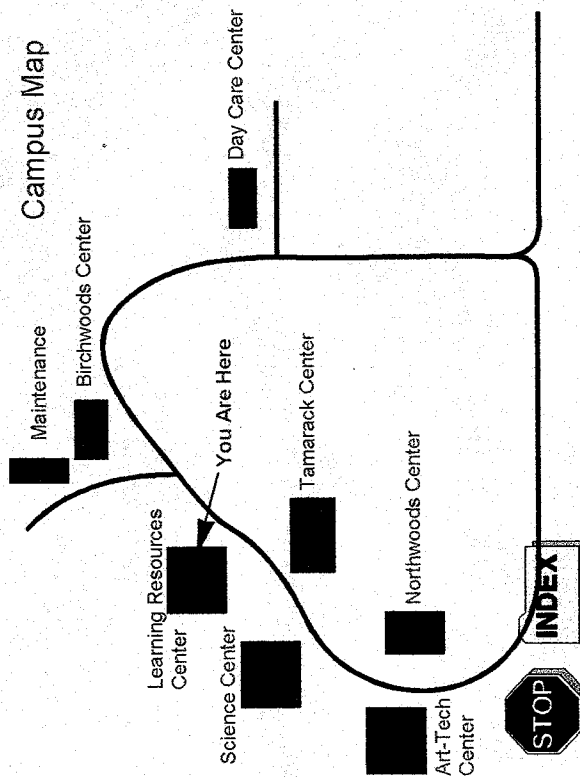
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Campus Map



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1 week
1 week
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